

Queer Superstitions

That Are Prevalent Among Our Mexican Neighbors

Mexicans enjoy the well-earned reputation of being one of the most superstitious races of the world. Superstition exists wherever there is a human being, but Mexico seems to be the place where all human superstitions are centered. To such an extent is this true that superstition has become almost a kind of religion, governing every act of the people.

Take the average Mexican of the poorer classes and you may hear from his lips hair-raising stories of ghosts and fairies and devils. He will tell you of the rare qualities of many animals, plants and stones, of the things you can do and those you cannot do on certain days of the week or the month, and, finally, he will invite you to make the sign of the cross to drive away the devils and the ghosts that may have been attracted by the conversation you have had.

From their earliest childhood the peons are taught to make the sign of the cross before going to sleep at night and before touching the floor with their toes in the morning. Maidens, until they become brides, are urged by their mothers to put their shoes point against point under their bed at night to bring happy dreams, and this will even enable them to converse with the Virgin during their sleep.

When dressing, the right shoe (never the left) is put on first. The buttons of the suit are buttoned upward, that is, starting with the lowest and ending at the top. This is to signify that we are very low here in this earthly planet, but that during the day we will try to go upward. Furthermore, this practice, if faithfully and constantly observed will lead us very high, to heaven when we die. The contrary will take us down to inferno.

After one is ready to go out of his room, one must always move the right foot first. If it happens that you find at the door of your house a bunch of hair or hemp it is a proof that a witch is after you with some ill purpose, and you must at once bring some salt and throw four handfuls as far as you can, one to the east, another to the west, the third to the north, and the last one to the south. Then you have nothing to fear from witches in the course of the day. But at night, when you retire, you must take two very fine sticks, make a cross with them and nail it to your door. No witches, ghosts or devils will bother you thereafter.

If before taking breakfast you happen to see a black cat, three lame fellows on one and the same street or a corpse, it would be better for you to go back home and stay indoors for the day, because something wrong is in store for you.

If, on the contrary, you meet a humpback, it would be good for you to shake hands with him, pat his hump and give him some money; if he is a beggar that will bring you good luck. Humpbacks are exceptionally good omens for those who buy lottery tickets. If you buy one, do not see the number until you have rubbed it against somebody's hump; then you are sure to win a prize.

Numbers 7, 15 and 27 are lucky; 3, 73 and 41 are unlucky. No. 13 especially is one that never fails to bring trouble, so never live in a house or room numbered 13; be very careful when you ascend a staircase with thirteen steps, never ride on a car No. 13, and under no circumstances eat, drink, or wear anything that has cost you 13 cents or dollars or that you have bought on the 13th of the month.

Tuesday and Friday are very bad

omen days, and there is a common saying that means do not marry or start on any business on Tuesday or Friday.

Black cats, spiders and owls are very bad omen creatures. Never keep a black cat at home, be sure to kill all spiders, you see crawling about your bed and always close tight your ears when you hear an owl hoot. Indians abhor owlets; they say: "When an owl sings an Indian dies; it may be untrue, yet it always happens."

Butterflies are good or bad omens, according to their color. White ones bring happiness; yellow ones advise us to maintain alive our hopes of love or fortune, and black ones announce that death is stalking around us or our relatives.

The dog is the greatest friend of man, no doubt about that, as he is endowed with the power of seeing ghosts, devils and death. When you hear your dog howling it is a proof that he is warning you against some evil event.

One thing of apparently small importance, but which brings fatal results, is the lighting of three cigars or cigarettes on the same match. One of the three persons lighting their cigars will die within the year.—Mexican Herald.

FIGHT FOR PENNY POST.

Slogan Sounded 250 Years Ago—International Rate the Climax.

It is almost exactly 250 years since the slogan "A Penny Post" was first sounded. The penny post became a fact throughout the United Kingdom only sixty-eight years ago. In the United States the people obtained that rate on a letter only twenty-five years ago. As that event occurred on October 1, 1883, the establishment last Thursday in a very quiet manner of a penny post between Great Britain and the United States was in reality not only a most fitting but an epoch making celebration of the reduction of internal letter postage to two cents. It is believed that only a few years will elapse before this rate will be adopted between many countries.

Reductions and improvements in postal rates have been obtained only by constant battling. It has required broad-minded men willing to sacrifice money and time to obtain the inestimable boon of inexpensive communication in writing. There are a number of little known facts connected with the fight of the true philanthropists who have won so much for the development of the world's civilization. The struggle for the transfer of a letter or message at a cost of one penny English, or two cents American, began in the days of the English Commonwealth. Charles I. the impecunious monarch, several years before his execution, established the "Letter Office in England." This was farmed out to Thomas Withering, for life, he receiving a monopoly of the carrying of letters. The charge was sixpence a letter. This was such a high price that many persons made use of other means of getting their letters to their destination. Private "undertakers" undertook to perform the service at cut rates, and parliament, at odds with the king, refused to support his "letter carrier" in the latter's efforts to punish the "undertakers" by imprisonment. Ten years later the "undertakers" were still a thorn in the flesh, and the official letter carrier and another "did in riotous manner, with swords and other weapons, by force break into the house, where the Goods and Letters of the Undertakers were, and thrust their servants out of doors; and after threatening speeches and many more outrages, restrained these undertakers from receiving Letters."—New York Tribune.

The Portuguese Government offers a subsidy of \$12,509 for each voyage for the purpose of establishing a Portuguese line of steamers to Brazil,



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